

HUMAN CLONING AND BIOETHICS: A BUDDHIST ETHICAL RESPONSE

By Dipak Kumar Barua

Prologue

The theme of Chapter is human cloning, although by way of reference animal cloning will also be discussed. Stem cell Research as a pre-condition of cloning has already been viewed from the perspectives of Buddhist and Bioethics. Hence an endeavour has been made herein to deal with the Buddhist concept of Ethics to be followed by a discussion on human cloning with its justification or otherwise from the point of view of Bioethics.

Buddhist Ethics

In Buddhism the whole concept of Ethics has been expressed, as mentioned in the previous Chapter, in a single term *Śīla* (Skt. Śīla) meaning moral practice, good character (not commandments) which consists of (1) *pānātipātā veramaṇi* , i.e. abstinence from taking life; (2) *adinnādānā*, from taking what is not give to one; (3) *abrahmacariyā*, adultery , otherwise called *kāmesu micchācārā*; (4) *musāvādā*, telling lies; (5) *pisuna-vācāya* , slander ; (6) *pharusa-vācāya*, harsh or impolite speech; (7) *samphappalāpā*, frivolous and senseless talk, (8) *abhijjhāya*, covetousness; (9) *byāpādā*, malevolence, (10) *micchādiṭṭhiyā*, heretic views. Of these ten, however, only the first seven are designated as *śīla per se*, or good character generally.¹ The

pañca-sīla or five items of good behaviour are No. 1-4 of the *dasa-sīla*, plus (5) abstaining from any state of indolence arising from the use of intoxicants, viz. *surāmeraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*. These five also form the first half of the ten *sikkhā-padāni*. They are a sort of preliminary condition to any higher development after conforming to the teaching of Buddha (*saraṇam-gamana*) and as such often mentioned when a novice is 'officially' admitted. Without a special title they are mentioned in connection with the *saraṇam gata* formula. Similarly the ten *sīlas* of the *dasa-sīla* are only called *dhammā*.² Besides; three special tracts on morality are traced in the *Pāli Tipiṭaka*. The *cuḷa-sīla*, 'lesser morality' consists of first of the seven items, i.e. 1 to 7 of the *dasa-sīla* and then follow specific injunctions as to practices of daily living and special conduct, of which the first five omitting the introductory item of *bijagāma-bhūtagāma smārambhā* from the second five *sikkhāpadāni*.³ The *cuḷa-sīla* is followed by the *majjhima-sīla* and *mahā-sīla*. "The whole of these three groups of *sīlas* is called *sīlakkhandha*."⁴

Introduction to Cloning

The term 'Cloning' signifies the technique of producing a genetically identical duplicate of an organism and a 'Clone' is said to be the descendant derived asexually from a single individual, as by cuttings, bulbs, by *fission*, by *mitosis*, or by *parthenogenesis*, reproduction. But this chapter is aimed to deal only with human cloning since it has been gaining increasing attention of the medical scientists, according to whom the clone is 'an exact genetic duplicate', i.e. a xerox copy of the jinn in the body cell. Nature has continuously been producing clone of not only

animals, but also of the human beings in the wombs of the mothers. This fact would be evident in the case of the birth of `identical twins`, i.e. from the very conception although one egg comes in contact with one sperm forming one cell, but ultimately in some cases due to the complex process of multiplying, instead of one single embryo would appear two embryos and in such instances the identical twins would be either two boys or two girls being the exact photo-copy of the other with identical mental and physical features. In such case of ordinary twins two eggs with two sperms would grow side by side in the mother's womb. But human cloning means asexual replication of a human individual by taking cells with genetic materials and cultivation of these cells through egg , embryo and finally into human being . The discovery of DNA (Deoxy-Ribo-Nucleic Acid) from which genes were made by Watson and Crick in 1953 became a great milestone in medical research .

The systematic work on cloning actually commenced in 1958 with a toad. Thereafter, one after another experiments have been carried on for cloning of rat, ram, cow, pig, asian gaor, dog and cat . But the effort for creating human clone in the mother's womb is indeed a `giant leap` in the history of humanity. When the first test tube baby was produced in 1978 it was a great breakthrough in genetic engineering. In 1997 Ian Wilmut, a British scientist, placed cells from the mammary of a pregnant sheep in a special solution that prevented multiplication. An unfertilized egg, the nucleus of which was removed, was taken from another sheep. These two cells were brought together and stimulated to multiply for the formation of an embryo. This was implanted into the uterus of another sheep which finally gave birth to the miraculous baby sheep, now named Dolly which was a copy of the

sheep from whose udder the cells were taken. The sheep's or ram's clone Dolly was so christened after a film-actress Dolly Parton who is celebrated for her high breast. There is rapid and astonishing progress in the field of cloning since the making of Dolly. Researchers in Boston announced on January 21, 1998 that they had successfully created two identical, genetically engineered calves ('pharm' animals), George and Charlie, which could make medicines in their milk. The cloned calves were genetically altered in advance to fit in an extra gene in all their cells called human serum albumin. By implication these advances suggest that it will be possible to use similar techniques to grow engineered animals containing cells and organs that can be transplanted into humans. While Dolly was cloned from a cell taken from an adult mammal, George and Charlie were cloned from foetuses-comparatively an easier method. All such experiments would reveal that a life can be created from the fragments of another life. This can be applied to humans as well. A woman can produce a baby from her own tissue and ovum without any physical contact with a man.

Further, some scientists at the Bath University succeeded in producing a headless frog by manipulating certain genes suppressing the development of the head. Also this technique has paved the way for people needing transplant in human organs.⁵

In recent years some overenthusiastic scientists are threatening to go one further step forward. Instead of just limiting their research to developing identical animals or human body organs, they are planning to clone a whole human being.

Bioethics and Cloning

Thus as an inevitable part of cloning has rapidly been growing Stem Cell Research. From the Bioethical point of view human cloning may be defended with following arguments:

1. Stem Cell Research may lead to cloning a whole human being. In such case, if surrogate motherhood as an ethically acceptable process is recognized, cloning is more or less the same.
2. From the Buddhist point of view if the human cloning would become possible, then at least one *Sīla*, "Morality", i.e. abstention from going astray in the sensual pleasures would be observed for being engaged in illegal or undesirable sex, although there remains every possibility of ignoring the very first *sīla*, Abstention from non-injury to life.
3. If religious people consider humans as co-creators with god, then the humans should not be prevented from improving the creation.
4. If cloning is considered a violation of one's rights, then preventing it also means violation of scientist's rights.
5. Cloned individuals need not be necessarily be identified with the donor. As

even identical twins are different from each other, influenced by environment and other psychosocial factors.

6. In organ and bone marrow transplants, threat of rejection is a big problem. In cloning these organs would be an exact genetic match of the recipient and so there will be no rejection .

7. Emotional and religious sentiments need to be weighed against scientific progress if it is ultimately for the benefit for humanity. Besides, there are the following other humane arguments in favour of human cloning.

8. Those couples who are not able to go get child in natural Sexual intercourse due to physical disorder may be Parents through cloning .

9. Two homosexual women, who would want child, could get one by cloning.

10. Research on Stem Cell, which is a part of cloning research, could help medical treatment .

11. Cloning offers to the humanity an assurance for immortality, which may have good or bad consequences .

On the other hand, from the Bioethical perspective there are some of the following views against Cloning:

1. Every form of reproductive technology raises the question of human values, dignity, worth, jurisdictional right. A person should not be used as a mere mechanical instrument. Human being is an unrepeatable entity.
2. Cloned embryo may undergo mutation and can lead to the creation of a monster instead of a human being.
3. Natural birth is a product of human love. In cloning, the values of love and human procreation are missing.
4. If the human clones are created in the laboratories, then men and women would bereft of the pleasures of the senses as babies, would born only through human cells, although the sensual pleasure is against the third Buddhist *Sīla*, i.e. Observance of celibacy .
5. Human cloning violates human relationships between person and god, between husband and wife and between parents and children.
6. In cloning, the human often plays the role of a god and causes social disorder by violating emotional sentiments.
7. It violates the principle of equality among human beings and the principle of non-discrimination through selective eugenic dimensions.

8. Problems may also arise with regard to the nationality of cloned child.⁶

But the general opinion from the strong ethical point of view of killing living beings, is that 'don't clone humans', because in case of Dolly it is experienced that out of 277 experiments only one becomes successful in the birth of Dolly, i.e. 276 embryos have unintentionally been destroyed during experiments, an incident which indicates the loss of life or birth of disabled animals. Again it was reported that on February 14, 2003 this first cloned sheep Dolly born in July 1996 died due to severe lung infection. In case of humans also during the cloning process many embryos would either be destroyed or some disabled children would be born without any fault of theirs or the cloned human baby would die permanently. Under these circumstances, human cloning would be treated as an act of criminal offence.⁷

Buddhist Ethical Response to Human Cloning

As an act of compassion Buddhism encourages donation of organ tissue and such an act involves individual conscience. It is indeed commendable to those people who donate their bodies and organs to the advancement of medical science and to save lives. Buddhist Ethics would support the benefits accrued from Stem Cell and Human Cloning Researches for curing diseases like diabetes, and Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, heart disease and paralysis. But because of some risks involved in human cloning. Buddhist Ethics would never approve the same. During experiments human embryos may be destroyed and such futile attempts would be quite opposite to the statement regarding the non-injury to life as recorded in the

Brahmajāla-Sutta and the *Sāmaññaphala-Sutta* of the Pali *Dīgha-Nikāya* as already pointed out.⁸ It is said that a person observes the first moral principle “by putting away killing of living beings, holding aloof from the destruction of life, laying aside the cudgel and the sword, being ashamed of roughness, being full of mercy, being compassionate and kind to all creatures that have life.”⁹ Further it has been stated in the Pali *Paṭisambhidāmagga* that *cetanā*, “volition” is virtue; mental properties are virtues; restraint is virtue; non-transgression is virtue.¹⁰ Now volition is virtue of that person who abstains from life-taking and so forth, or who fulfils his set duties. Likewise, mental properties of such a person constitute virtue, who abstains from taking life and so forth. In fact all the Buddhist texts, in general, strictly enjoin abstinence from destroying all living beings. Thus according to Buddhist Ethics non-injury to all forms of life is obligatory. There is no compromise in this regard. That is why the first *Sīla* is concerned with abstinence from taking life. From this perspective and exclusively for this reason researches on human cloning should be strictly discouraged.

Epilogue

Although much objection has already been raised against human cloning and USA has officially banned human cloning there, still the Human Cloning Foundation, of which website is www.humancloning.Org in collaboration with Dr. Brad Honenfert is engaged in creating human clone, and the Advanced Cell Technology Inc., in Worcester, Massachusetts, U.S.A., announced on November 25, 2001 that it had for the first time used cloning technology to grow a tiny ball of cells that could then be

used as a source of stem cells which would be the master cells that could grow into any kind of cell in the body. Mary Ann Liebert, publisher of the online journal *E-biomed* which carrying the report informs: "This is a milestone in therapeutic cloning ... These results, which add to the weight of evidence that human cell reprogramming is possible, are very significant given the importance of the growing field of regenerative medicine." The Federal Law of the USA prohibits the use of taxpayers' money in the cloning of human, but since the Advanced Cell Technology is a privately funded company it can do as it pleases. The aforesaid US private company's announcement that it had cloned a human embryo become a breakthrough experiment aimed not at creation of a human being but at mining the embryo for stem cells used to treat diseases. Even this argument of this US company for cloning and stem-cell researches are not permitted by Buddhist Ethics and Bioethics.

But Dr. Severino Antinori, an Italian medical scientist had declared at the National Academy of Science in Washington D.C., USA, that human cloning would be possible. Two exponents of his theory were Dr. Panariotis Javos and Dr. Brijit Boyseliyar who without any fear again had publicly announced that in spite of worldwide protest they would create human clone . After this announcement through an unofficial source it was known that human clone had actually been made possible sometime in January 2003 in Israel. This news may be true or propaganda, but the fact that those days are not far away when cloned humans would be created by the scientists in their laboratories. On the other hand the Clon Aid Company had proclaimed that the fifth cloned baby would be born on February 05, 2003. It also

claimed that this Company was the first one to create human clone. This Company on January 22, 2003 (Wednesday) during hearing in the Court had openly informed that the third human cloned baby had already been born of a married Japanese lady. The Court asked the Company to disclose the name of the scientist through whose endeavour the first cloned human baby was born. But the Company could not produce such a cloned human baby. Later on, the spokesman of the Company informed that the Director of that Company in due course in a press conference would speak in details about the creation of cloned babies by this Company. He also intimated that on January 03, 2003 two cloned human babies-one of a Japanese and other of a Dutch lady-were born. The first one was a boy and the other one was a girl. But the Company could not again produce any evidence in favour of cloned babies. The Clon Aid Company further claimed that on February 05, 2003 five cloned human babies would be born. According to this Company the first human cloned baby was born to an American lady on December 26, 2002 and the first cloned girl baby was named Eve. At that time the Company wanted the DNA test of the cloned baby. But parents of that baby did not agree to do so.¹¹

Notes and References:

1. *Anguttara-Nikāya* (PTS), Vol. I, p 269
2. *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 253 sq
3. *Dīgha-Nikāya* (PTS) Vol. I. pp. 3 s.
4. Rhys Davids, T.W. and Stede, William eds . *The Pāli Text Society' s Pāli English Dictionary* (London, Luzac Co. Ltd. 1996), p. 712.

5. *Health For The Millions, Jan-Feb., 1998, p. 28.*
6. *Hindustan : Ravi Utsava* (in Hindi), Varanasi , dated January 19, 2003,
p. 1 (Manav Cloning)
7. *The Transplantation of Human Organs Act , 1994 (Act No . 42 of 1994)*
assented by the President of India on July 08, 1994 and enforced from
February 4, 1995 by the Government of India; about the Japanese
Transplantation Law-cf. *Buddhism and Bio-ethics* , a paper submitted by
Ronand Y. Nakasona to the XXVII International Buddhist Conference held at
Bodh-Gaya, India, on December 08, 2002 .
8. *Dīgha-Nikāya*, Vol. I (PTS), pp. 1-46, 47-68.
9. Barua, Dipak Kumar: An analytical study of Four Nikāyas (Delhi, Munshiram
Manoharlal Pub. Pvt. Ltd., 2003), pp. 129-130.
10. *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (PTS), I, p. 44
11. *Hindustan*, Hindi Edition, Varnasi, dated January 24, 2003.